



# Bringing the State back in the study of professions. Some peculiarities of the French model of professionalization

Thomas Le Bianic

## ► To cite this version:

Thomas Le Bianic. Bringing the State back in the study of professions. Some peculiarities of the French model of professionalization. 6th European Sociological Association Conference (Research Network Sociology of Professions), University of Murcia, Spain, 24th–26th September, 2003, Sep 2003, pp.19. halshs-00096127

**HAL Id: halshs-00096127**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00096127>**

Submitted on 19 Sep 2006

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

**DOCUMENT DE TRAVAIL - L.E.S.T.- CNRS – UMR 6123**

Université de Provence (U1) et Université de la Méditerranée (U2) - 35 avenue J. FERRY - 13626 AIX-EN-PROVENCE CEDEX

Tél. : Standard : 04.42.37.85.00 - Fax : 04.42. 26.79.37 email lest@univ-aix.fr

**6<sup>th</sup> ESA CONFERENCE**

**Research Network Sociology of Professions**

**University of Murcia, Spain**

**24<sup>th</sup>–26<sup>th</sup> September, 2003**

**Bringing the State back in the study of professions. Some peculiarities of the  
French model of professionalization**

**Thomas Le Bianic**

**LEST-CNRS**

***(Institute of Labor Economics and Industrial Sociology)***

**35, avenue Jules Ferry**

**13626 Aix en Provence**

**France**

**phone: 33 (0)4 42 37 85 06**

**Fax: 33 (0)4 42 26 79 37**

**E-mail : lebianic@univ-aix.fr**

## **Introduction**

The different meaning which is associated to the term "profession" in France and in Anglo-American countries has been noted by most students of the professions. Some scholars even argue that the word conveys so many social representations in Anglo-Saxon societies that it is almost untranslatable into any other language (Szreter, 1993). Beyond these subtleties of language, it is obvious that the same questions are often tackled by French and Anglo-American sociologists, even if they proceed from different theoretical traditions. One of these common questions deals with the role of the state in the professionalization process.

The anglo-saxon literature on professions classically provides us with two opposite views of the relationships between states and professions, each corresponding to a specific political and institutional environment. These views are frequently based on a somewhat oversimplified vision of the national contexts. Continental countries (France, Italy, Germany...) are generally defined by their high degree of "stateness" : in these countries, states act mainly as "creators" of professional groups and professional "jurisdictions", in order to intervene in the various sectors of social life. As Abbott puts it :

"The French state not only organizes professions and structures their jurisdictions, it also displays an endless ability to create professional work" (1988, p. 161)

States, who directly employ a great number of professionals, later exert a close control over professions in their stage of institutionalization.

On the opposite end, in Anglo-saxon countries, states are supposed to play an almost passive role in the professionalization process, restricting their intervention to the granting of legally-based privileges, such as licensure, credentials, monopolies of practice...

If we follow this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, the different countries split up along a single line distinguishing among countries by their degree of "stateness" (Heidenheimer, 1989). At the top of this line are the countries characterized by a high degree of stateness, in which the state directly employs and regulates professions. At the bottom, we find countries with a low degree of stateness, the state being here a mere protector of professional groups, creating the conditions for self-government. A more refined conception of this theorizing is to be found in Freidson (2001).

A close examination of the professionalization of psychology in France in the period 1945-1990<sup>1</sup> led us to call into question the relevance of such a model when applied to a concrete case of professionalization. First, the example of psychologists shows that the state does not behave as a unitary actor in front of the professions. The state apparatus comprises various segments, each acting in a different way towards the professions, and trying to promote a particular segment within the profession. In a way, states' policies towards professions are much more "anarchical" than in the vision traditionally expressed by Anglo-American accounts of professionalization. Second, it can hardly be said that the state exerted a strong control over the profession during the period considered : if the public authorities gave the initial impulsion by employing psychologists in many public services in the period 1945-1970 (guidance counsellors, industrial psychologists, clinical psychologists in hospitals, legal psychologists in courts...), the profession gradually emancipated from state control, especially in the 1980's as will be shown. Third, it is important to distinguish the state's position as *employer* of professionals and its position as *producer of rules* in direction of the professions. These roles frequently interfere with each other, giving rise to conflicts within the state apparatus (for example between the administrations employing professionals and the legislative power).

How far can the Anglo-American analyses of state-professions relations be applied to the French political and institutional environment ? Are professional groups mainly defined by their privileged relation to the state in France ? The main purposes of this paper are 1) to call into question the relevance of Anglo-American analyses of state-professions relationships when applied to the French case ; 2) to begin to develop a framework for an alternative perspective to the state-professions relations, more suitable for cross-national comparisons.

The paper will start with a critical examination of a part of the Anglo-American literature dealing with the relationships between professions and the state – focusing especially on marxist, neo-weberian and neo-institutionalist writers. The second section will draw on an empirical case – the professionalization of psychology in France between 1945 and 1985 – to show some of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Date sources for this research include archives of various professional associations, especially those of the French federation of psychologists' professional associations (the ANOP, Association Nationale des Organisations de psychologues) and archives of the French Government located at the *Archives Nationales* (Ministry of education and Ministry of Labour). Several interviews were also made with executives of psychologists' professional associations between 2001 and 2003

limitations of current Anglo-American analyses of state-professions relations when applied to the French case.

## **2. Professions and the State : a critical examination of the Anglo-American literature**

Sociologists have been concerned with the relationships between the state and professional groups at least since Durkheim (1950). But in the main theoretical frameworks that have guided sociological research over the professions up to the 1970's, the state was either confined to a passive role, granting privileges to aspiring occupations – in the functionalist approach – or totally absent – in the interactionist perspective. The rapidly growing number of studies focusing on the state's role in professionalization processes from 1970 onwards is the result of a double shift : 1) The sociologists' will to introduce a more conflicting vision than the one traditionally conveyed by the functionalists 2) The wish to reintroduce institutional and "macro-level" dimensions in the study of professional groups (in opposition to the interactionists' micro-level analysis).

### *a) The marxist approach*

The marxist sociology of the professions is primarily interested in the position of professionals in the relations of production. A classical question is whether the professionals will swell the ranks of the proletariat or those of the bourgeoisie. Two stands have been taken on this topic. A first trend, represented by authors like Braverman (1974), Larson (1977) or Derber (1982), defends the thesis of a "proletarianization" of the professionnals in the course of the development of capitalism, the latter entailing a commodification of intellectual work. A second trend, more directly linked to our subject, puts a strong emphasis on the professionals' role in the reproduction of the capitalist social order. The idea is that professionals help the state to uphold the capitalist system (physicians, for example are a key-element in the reproduction of a healthy labour-force). Consequently, professional workers permit a strong state's hold over society. In return, the state is interested in helping certain occupations to professionalize, since they will prolong his own action over society.

Terry Johnson's (1972, 1982) and G Larkin's (1983) first works are the epitome of such views, since they argue that professionalization is part of a wider process of state formation. As Johnson (1982) puts it :

"The professions are emergent as an aspect of state formation and state formation is a major condition of professional autonomy" (p. 189)

As intellectually appealing as it may be, the marxist approach to state-professions relations has proved deficient in many respects. First, the marxist perspective suffers from historical incorrectness, since professions developed well before the process of state formation and the advent of capitalism. Therefore, the hypothesis of an interconnection between states, capital and the professions must be seriously called into question, particularly in the light of other hypotheses that postulate an antagonism between professional and capitalist ideologies, professions appearing as mere survivals of a pre-capitalist era, doomed to vanish in the face of capitalism (Krause, 1996). But the major shortcoming of the marxist approach certainly lies in the explanatory scheme at work in this theory. Professions and states are presented as unified and coherent actors, pursuing pre-defined goals. The vision implied is that of a certain "inevitability" of the structures, which shape the interrelations between states and professions. A more balanced view would certainly emerge from empirical evidence, showing the different segments fighting within the same profession in order to gain support from a particular segment of the state apparatus. The focus on class conflict – which supposedly drives the professionalization process – tends to undervalue other important dimensions of the conflict within the state apparatus or within the professions themselves, as shown by Bucher and Strauss (1961).

*b) State-profession relationships in neo-weberian approaches : functionalism reborn ?*

The functionalist sociology contributed to spread a harmonious vision of state-profession relationships. The state, indeed, was conceived as almost passive, professionalization being the inescapable outcome of an ever-expanding "rationality" (Parsons, 1939). Therefore, the state's main function consisted in granting to the professions a certain number of attributes, or traits, supposedly essential for the acquisition of a "true" professional identity.

In short, it will be argued here that neo-weberian authors have so far failed to promote an alternative vision of state/profession relationships from the functionalist one. Indeed, neo-Weberian analyses are strongly influenced by the "pluralist" vision inherent in Anglo-American societies, which puts face to face the state with "self-regulating" communities. But this analytical framework is of little help to understand state/professions relationships in France or other continental countries, where professions are frequently incorporated into the state apparatus,

creating a *continuum* between professions and the state. Before coming to this argument, it is necessary to recall what is usually meant by "neo-weberian approach".

The common characteristic of neo-weberian approaches to professionalization (which today have come to dominate the field) is their focus on the phenomenon of "market closure" (Collins, 1990). Professions are typically described as social groups striving to extend their monopoly over the delivery of certain kinds of services (*e.g.* health, education, law...). This new perspective contributed to the development of a critical vision (in opposition to the functionalists' irenic approach) since monopoly might be acquired to the detriment of the public.

In the neo-weberian perspective, the state plays an important part in the professionalization process since monopoly can only be effective when legally sanctioned by the state. But the neo-weberians hold in common with the functionalists their definition of the state as a mere "legitimizing instance". The state is not really an "actor" in the professionalization process, which is viewed more as a series of conflicts between different occupations (Abbott, 1988) or between these occupations and the public (Larson, 1977).

In Freidson's writings, for example, the state's role is limited to the provision of a certain type of political and institutional environment which sometimes favours professionalism (in liberal states) and sometimes hampers it (in highly centralized states). Professionalism can blossom only when embedded in a favourable political environment :

"While professions, unlike other kinds of occupations, control their own and thus can be considered autonomous in a division of labor and in their labor markets, they are dependent on the coercive power of the state to support such autonomy. They are autonomous in their own economic sector but not in society at large because they depend on the state for their empowerment" (2001, p. 133)

Much the same comments might be made regarding Abbott's ecological approach, which mainly focuses on the struggles taking place within the "ecology" of the professions, *i.e.* on the way in which professions acquire or lose their jurisdictions. In Abbott's perspective, competing professions strive to protect their jurisdiction by making claims in different arenas. Professional struggles occur at three levels : the workplace, the arena of public opinion, and the legal system (which involves the state). The state's involvement in jurisdictional struggles is therefore very limited : its role merely consists in "endorsing" evolutions which have already taken place *within* the ecology of the professions, but it does not directly shape these evolutions :

"Professions often attempt legal jurisdiction early in their development (...) but by the time a profession actually achieves legal establishment, it has usually long since won its

public position (...) The legalities of professional jurisdiction today reflect outside forces, rather than determine them" (1988, p. 165).

Like Freidson, therefore, Abbott implicitly subscribes to a "bottom-up" view of professionalization : the state is located above the professions and delegates power to independent and self-regulated professional organizations (through legislative support). But the consequences of the strong interpenetration of the state and the professions in many continental countries (which significantly set bounds to the capacity of the professions to organize themselves) are seldom explored by Freidson and Abbott. The question then becomes whether the theoretical framework of the Anglo-American sociology of the professions can highlight the peculiarities of a "continental model". This issue has been tackled by a certain number of sociologists in the 1990's, as part of an effort towards opening the "black box" of the state in the sociology of the professions.

c) *The influence of neo-institutionalism in the sociology of the professions : towards opening the "black box" of the state ?*

Properly speaking, there is no group labelled as "neo-institutionalist" among the sociologists of the professions. But this theoretical trend has oriented a great number of research in the field, especially in the 1990's. Neo-institutionalist writers share at least two common ideas :

First, the role of the state has not been sufficiently taken into account in the analyses of social phenomena. Hence the necessity of a shift from "society centered approaches" (e.g. marxist approach) to "state-centered approaches", which emphasize the way in which states constitute autonomous sources of power (Evans and *al.*, 1985). In this approach, states are viewed as polymorphic actors, relatively impervious to the demands of the civil society and social groups. This approach has proved very fruitful in the study of the professions. As Krause points out :

"There are a group of scholars who are beginning to focus on the state as a key actor in professional life. A series of monographs – Reuschemeyer (1973) on German versus American lawyers, Stone (1980) on German doctors and the health insurance system, Immergut (1987) on French, Swedish and Swiss doctors and their respective states – have all shown that professional autonomy and guild power cannot be studied without studying the state as well" (1996, p.20)

A second feature of neo-institutionalism is the belief in the virtues of comparativism for our understanding of social phenomena. State/professions relationships are explored through the



identification of national models, structured over long periods of time. Comparativism can take two forms. A first group of scholars pays particular attention to the national variations in the constructions of professionalism. Krause (1996) is typical of this trend as he makes a cross-national comparison of four professions in five countries (United States, Britain, France, Germany and Italy). Johnson (1995), Hassenteufel (1997) and Reuschemeyer (1973) adopt a perspective which is close to Krause's but they appear less ambitious since they focus on only one profession (health professions for the two first, lawyers for the last one). Another group of scholars is interested in the evolutions of professionalism within the same country, comparing different historical periods. This perspective has proved particularly relevant in the analysis of the transition from a "state-oriented professionalism" to a "market oriented professionalism" in the 1990's Eastern Europe. Anthony Jones' collective work (1991) and also Evetts and Buchner-Jeziorska's contribution to the debate (1997) seem to be part of this theoretical project.

To conclude this listing of the contributions influenced by the neo-institutionalist approach, let us mention some relevant issues raised by Louis Orzack (1993) and Julia Evetts (2001) regarding the emergence of new kinds of transnational sources of regulation for the professions. As Julia Evetts points out :

"Today the intellectual field of sociology of professions has been dominated by **within-state** theorizing. We need also to take account of international developments, professional institutions and forms of regulation beyond the nation-state" (2001, p. 12)

It is clear, for example, that the European Community (EC) is an increasing source of regulation for many professions in Europe, through the definition of standards for credentialing and training. One of the aims pursued by the EC, indeed, is to free the movement of professional labour-force across Europe. Within this new framework, the shelters acquired by professions over time are more and more called into question, as are the classical forms of bargaining between professions and states.

These new patterns of regulation tend to be regarded by some scholars as additional sources of constraint for the professions. This, indeed, might be the case for some liberal professions who managed to acquire a large autonomy within a given nation-state (Orzack 1991). But these emerging authorities of regulation might also turn into new resources for the professions, particularly those submitted to a strong state control. French psychologists, for example, found new arguments in the EFPPA (European Federation of Professional Psychologists' Association) to get rid of training standards arbitrarily defined by administrations employing psychologists (especially the Ministry of Education). What is relevant to our topic is the way in which these

transnational sources of regulation disconnect the traditional role of the state as legislator towards the profession and his function as employer of professionals, forcing him to enter into a new "regulative bargain" with the profession (Cooper et al. 1998).

### **3. "Cognitive communities" and "status communities" : two conflicting logics in the professionalization of French psychology**

French professionalism is particularly illustrative of a tension between two ways of acquiring social prestige. The first way is through the participation of professionals in a "cognitive community", structured around a scientific discourse and a common academic background. What is important here is the knowledge base upon which the group builds its legitimacy, as in the Anglo-American ideal-type of the professions. High training standards and the epistemological status of the discipline are at the core of professional legitimacy. As pointed out by Larson (1977) :

"The professional project is an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources – *special knowledge and skills* – into another – social and economic rewards"

But, as is the case in many continental countries, high prestige can also be obtained through the establishment of privileged relations with the state and the creation of "shelters" within the state bureaucracy. Prestige, here, is derived more from the status and the rank within the state bureaucracy, than the natural consequence of an expert knowledge. Here, a principle of "proximity to the state" seems to be at work<sup>2</sup>.

A good example of this tension is the way in which "cognitive communities" and "status communities" are taken into account differently in French and British occupational categorizations. In France, the sector of employment (private sector / public sector) is a fundamental line of cleavage (Szreter, 1993 ; Desrosières et Thévenot, 2000 ; Kieffer, 2001). This is why psychologists, for example, appear in three different categories in the PCS (*Professions et Catégories socioprofessionnelles*) depending on whether they are self-employed (3114), employed by the Ministry of education (3433), or employed in a private firm (3722). The same goes for physicians, who are either classified as self-employed (3112), employed in a

---

<sup>2</sup> Some scholars even argue that in the French case the public model of classification (around status) has progressively spread in the private sector during the XXth Century, giving birth to the model of the "cadres" (Saglio, 1999)

public hospital (3431) or employed by an administration or a private company (such as occupational physicians for example). One can also notice that in France the same category sometimes gathers people with very different trainings : the category 333 for instance (“public sector executives”) brings together computer analysts, statisticians or legal professionals.

The "Socio-economic classification" (NS-SEC) recently adopted in the United Kingdom seems to be governed by quite different principles, since the sector of employment (public or private) is barely taken into account in the classification :

“An occupation that has been regarded as professional is professional regardless of employment status. For example, a supervisor who is also a scientist is classified as a professional (in L3) and not as supervisor in L6.” (The National Statistics, Socio-Economic classification, User manual, April 2002)

To be classified as a "professional", therefore, mainly depends on the academic background, *i.e.* the fact of belonging to a cognitive community, constructed around a scientific legitimacy. That is why category L3 (professionals) appears as a mere list of academic specializations : (L3.1 20 : natural scientists ; L3.1 21 : engineers ; L3. 1 22 : health professions ; L3 1 24 : legal professionals L3.1 25 : business and financial professionals...) (Rose, O'Reilly, 1998).

This tension between "cognitive communities" and "status communities" has generally been treated by scholars in terms of an opposition between continental countries and Anglo-American countries. Yet, very often, both logics may coexist within a same country and it would be more fruitful to regard it as a cross-dimension at work in every country. Cognitive communities, for example, can be said to exist in France too, even if professional groups are mainly organized around status. In the same way, the diversity of employment statuses of professionals in Anglo-American countries certainly affects the groups' ability to organize themselves around a common knowledge or common skills. The question, therefore, is how cognitive communities and status communities interact in the construction of the professions. What is the nature of this interaction ? How do professions manage to overcome their statutory divergences in the construction of a cognitive community ? But, before answering these questions, we must trace back the origins of "status communities" in France, illustrating it with the case of psychologists.

a) *"Status communities" in the construction of French professionalism : the case of psychologists*

As was the case in most industrial countries, French psychology came out of the laboratory in the 1920's and quickly became a professional activity, especially in the fields of vocational guidance, industrial psychology and health psychology. But, unlike their British, German or American counterparts, French psychologists failed to set up a powerful professional association that would have advanced the interests of the profession. The main association, the SFP (*Société Française de Psychologie*), was founded in 1901 and mainly remains, even today, a scholarly association, showing very little concern for professional issues. The field of French professional psychology is, above all, characterized by an extraordinary segmentation of the professional associations, each corresponding either to an area of practice or an employment status.

The epistemological sources of these divisions in France have been widely commented on by scholars, since Daniel Lagache's work on the "Unity of psychology" (1947)<sup>3</sup> which draws a fundamental line of distinction between two kinds of psychology : experimental psychology, based on laboratory methods, and clinical psychology based on the comprehensive observation of human behaviour. These theoretical struggles might certainly explain some of the conflicts that agitated French psychology over the last decades. It is clear, for example that the strong influence of psychoanalysis over clinical psychology in France contributed to increasing the divisions between "experimental psychologists" and "clinical psychologists". But the consequences of these epistemological conflicts on professional issues should not be overstated, since professional divisions are seldom the mere transposition of theoretical struggles. A more fruitful way to explain French psychology's internal divisions is to focus on the employment statuses of the various categories of psychologists, especially those employed in the civil service. Since the 1920's, indeed, the profession developed under the leadership of politically influent academics like Henri Piéron or Henri Wallon whose primary concern was to create shelters for psychologists within the state apparatus. The creation of these shelters appears as the result of successful alliances established with a particular segment of the state. An example derived from school psychology will illustrate this point. Since 1945, three different categories of psychologists coexist within the Ministry of Education, each corresponding to a specific field of intervention (primary, secondary or vocational/technical). It is important to note that these three fields of intervention correspond to different – and frequently conflicting – administrations within the Ministry of Education. I will only develop the example of two of these categories : vocational counsellors and school psychologists. The first category are the *Conseillers*

---

<sup>3</sup> Lagache (Daniel), *L'unité de la psychologie*, Paris, PUF, 1947

*d'orientation psychologues* (COPs)<sup>4</sup>, who were created in 1938 under the impulse of *direction de l'enseignement technique* (central government office for vocational and technical education). The purpose of this category was initially to fuel the vocational and technical schools with new recruits. The idea of the government, therefore, was not to promote psychology in itself, but to create a category of civil servants that would correctly advise the pupils, basing their practice on psychology. A special institute was created by the Ministry of education for this purpose : the National Institute of Vocational Guidance (INOP). Apart from preparing students for state service, the INOP was also, from its creation (1928) up to the 1970's, one of the most prestigious institution for higher learning in psychology in France, graduating hundreds of students each year.

The "school psychologists" (*psychologues scolaires*) form another group of psychologists within the Ministry of Education, employed by the *direction de l'enseignement primaire* (central government office for primary education). Their mission differs from that of the COPs since their primary role is to facilitate the children's school adjustment. Unlike the COPs, school psychologists have to have been formerly primary teachers (during five years) and receive a 2 year training outside the university, within an institute which is under the direct control of the Ministry of education (the IUFM). Once graduated, school psychologists remain in the category of "primary teachers" whereas the COPs are classified as "secondary teachers" (and, as such, receive higher wages than school psychologists).

#### *b) Status communities : an obstacle to the professionalization of psychology in France*

The interesting point in this example is to examine the way in which these vertical alliances (between school psychologists and primary education on the one hand ; between the COPs and vocational education on the other) affected the capacity of the profession to organize itself as a cognitive community. Such conflicts between cognitive communities and status communities appeared at two crucial moments of the professionalization process of psychology : 1) during the educational reforms which took place in France during the 1960's under the ministry of Fouchet (1962-1967) and 2) during the preparation of the law protecting the title psychologist between 1980 and 1992. In the 1960's, school psychologists and the COPs tried to take advantage of the educational reforms conducted by the minister Fouchet to promote the idea of a "single category

---

<sup>4</sup> Vocational counsellors

of psychologists" within the educational system. This new category of "educational psychologists" would be trained at university (and no longer in specialized public institutes) and would be able to intervene at different levels of the educational system (primary, secondary, vocational and higher education). In spite of the support of the profession (especially academics and professional associations), the creation of this category was made impossible by a double opposition. The first opponents were a powerful trade union of primary teachers who argued that the category of "school psychologists" provided an opportunity of promotion for primary teachers who usually spent their whole career within the same job. Another group of opponents to the project could be found within the central government office for primary education, who did not want to raise the status of school psychologists. In their view, the intervention of "educational psychologists" (classified as secondary teachers) in the primary education could have created conflicts between primary teachers and the psychologists. The best solution, therefore, was to keep choosing school psychologists among the category of primary teachers. This first episode did not seriously damage the professionalization process of psychology as a whole since the other branches of applied psychology (clinical and health psychology, industrial psychology, forensic psychology...) also suffered from a lack of organization and had failed to set up a single association that could have advanced the interests of the profession.

Between 1965 and 1980 several contacts were established between the various professional organizations of psychologists who finally gathered within a single federation, the ANOP (*Association nationale des organisations de psychologues*), in order to obtain legal protection of the title "psychologist" whatever the field of practise. The idea was to promote a social recognition of the "psychological dimension", psychologists being the most legitimate experts in "adjusting" people to their life conditions in modern societies. But this time, the coexistence of different categories of psychologists within the Ministry of Education proved to be a serious obstacle to the unification of the profession : How could a single title of "psychologist" be defined in the context of a strong statutory segmentation of the profession ? Which training would be required to hold the title of "psychologist" ? As had already been the case in the 1960's, a conflict emerged between the office for primary education and the office for secondary education, who was now in charge of the COPs. The first refused to change the status of school psychologists and the second supported the protection of the title. The situation within the Ministry of Education was made even more complex by the fact that the *direction des enseignements supérieurs* (office for higher education) was in charge of the whole project for the protection of the title and had to define training requirements to hold the title. The conflicts

between these three offices hampered the ANOP's efforts to promote a "cognitive community" of psychologists and to protect the title. More importantly, school psychologists and COPs could not fulfil the requirements of the law project since they received a three or four year training, whereas the law explicitly referred to a minimum of five years. In order not to hamper the whole legislative process, professional organizations finally had to accept a derogatory status for psychologists employed by the Ministry of Education : School psychologists and COPs would obtain the title after "only" four years of training.<sup>5</sup>

*c) International levels of professional regulation : a step towards dismantling status communities ?*

The situation just described was not specific to psychologists employed by the Ministry of Education. Other publicly employed psychologists (in the Ministry of Labor or the Ministry of Health) also found their status very comfortable and deemed very limited the rewards they could obtain from protecting the title. This is why status communities can be said to have seriously hampered the professionalization process of psychology in the period 1960-1990. Even today, school psychologists and COPs keep a derogatory status in the profession. This situation, however, might change in the future. There are signs that the balance between status communities and cognitive communities is changing in France, in the context of an increasing influence of international sources of professional regulation. Status communities, indeed, are backed by the nation-state level more than by the international level. Their legitimacy is derived from their privileged relation to the state and not from an expert knowledge or a common academic background. The attempts to build professional communities beyond the nation-state level will certainly introduce radical changes in the professionalization processes, especially regarding state / professions relationships.

Psychologists, here again, provide a good example to understand recent evolutions. In 2001, the *European Framework for Psychologists' Training* (funded by the European Union under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme) proposed a common framework for the training of psychologists in Europe, with a duration of 6 years. If this new "European diploma for psychologists" is to be adopted in France, it will certainly raise new issues for the profession. Many French professional associations of psychologists think that this new diploma will be an opportunity to improve the

---

<sup>5</sup> The law protecting the title was finally adopted in 1985

law of 1985, considered as unfair (school psychologists and COPs obtaining the title after only 4 years of training whereas the other categories of psychologists obtain it after at least 5 years).

This brief example shows that the European level of professional regulation displaces the terms of the debate : state/profession relationships can no longer be understood simply in the nation-state context. I contend that the emergence of a European level of professional regulation is a strong push towards the development of more "professional" forms of organization for a certain number of occupations in countries like France, where status communities have long been prevalent. Indeed, if occupations are no longer backed by the nation-state they will certainly have to invent new forms of collective organization, based on the belonging to the same cognitive community.

## **Conclusion**

The professionalization of psychology in France reveals at least three important issues regarding the relations between states and the professions. First, the conflicts between segments of the administration are at least as important for professionalization as are the conflicts within the ecology of the professions itself. The life of professional groups, therefore, does not only depend on jurisdictional struggles and the state cannot be reduced to a mere passive observer of what happens within the ecology of the professions. This observation seriously calls into question the frame of analysis proposed by Abbott (1988), especially when applied to publicly employed professionals.

Second, the classical opposition between continental countries (characterized by a high degree of "stateness" in Heidenheimer's typology) and Anglo-American countries (low "stateness") should not be overstated. It seems more relevant to draw an opposition between "status community" and "cognitive community", each occupation being a mix of both dimensions. Which one will prevail in the market closure process cannot be predicted. Psychologists, finally managed to overpass their statutory segmentation, in order to define a single profession around a knowledge base (through the law protecting the title, voted in 1985).

Third and finally, state / profession relationships can no longer be understood simply within the nation-state context. International forms of regulation constitute another important arena for



jurisdictional claims, seldom taken into account by sociologists<sup>6</sup>. This is particularly true for professions in Europe. This "internationalization of professionalism" both concerns the sources of regulation for professions (EC Directives, global trade agreements for example ...) and the professional forms of organization themselves (with the emergence of international professional associations). The emergence of these new levels of regulation will certainly contribute to weaken the "status communities" around which occupations were built in many countries and should promote professionalism in these countries. Such a viewpoint might seem a bit too optimistic for the future of professionalism, and is somewhat at odds with the classical view that points to "the end of the professions", in a context characterized by a loss of autonomy for many professionals. More than a decline of professionalism, our own investigation over psychologists would rather point to the renewal of professionalism in a context of internationalization.

## **References**

- Abbott, A. (1988) *The System of Professions : An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*, Chicago, Chicago University Press
- Braverman, H. (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capital : the degradation of work in the Twentieth Century*, New York, Monthly Review Press
- Bucher, R. and Strauss, A. (1961) "Professions in Process", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol 66, n°4, 1961, pp 352-334
- Buchner-Jeziorska, A. and Evetts, J. (1997) "Regulating Professionals. The Polish example", *International Sociology*, Vol. 12 (1), pp. 61-72
- Collins, R. (1990), "Market Closure and the Conflict Theory of the Professions", in Burrage, M. and Thorstendahl, R. (ed.) *Professions in Theory and History*, London, Sage

---

<sup>6</sup> This is particularly true of Abbott (1988) whose typology of arenas for jurisdictional claims (workplace/legal/public) omits the emergence of an "international" arena.

Cooper, D., Lowe, A., Puxty, A., Robson, K. and Willmott, H. (1988) "Regulating the UK Accountancy Profession: episodes in the relation between the profession and the state". Paper presented at ESRC Conference on *Corporatism* at the Policy Studies Institute, London, January

Derber, C. (1982) "Towards a new theory of professionals as workers: advanced capitalism and post-industrial labor" in C. Derber (ed) *Professionals as Workers: Mental Labor in Advanced Capitalism*. Boston: Mass.

Desrosières, A. and Thévenot, L. (2000), *Les catégories socio-professionnelles*, Paris, Editions La Découverte

Durkheim, E. (1950) "La morale professionnelle" in *Leçons de sociologie. Physique des mœurs et du droit*, Paris, PUF, pp. 25-49

Evans, P. ; Rueschemeyer, D. and Skocpol, T. (1985) *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Evetts, J. (2001) "New directions in State and international professional occupations : discretionary decision-making and acquired regulation". Paper presented at SASE 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on Socio-Economics, Amsterdam, June.

Freidson, E. (2001) *Professionalism, the third logic. On the Practice of Knowledge*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

Hassenteufel, P. (1997) *Les médecins face à l'Etat. Une comparaison européenne*, Paris, Presses de Science Po

Heidenheimer, A.J. (1989) "Professional Knowledge and State Policy in Comparative Historical Perspective - Law and Medicine in Britain, Germany and the United States", *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 41, pp 529-553

Johnson, T. (1972) *Professions and power*, London, Macmillan

Johnson, T. (1982) « The State and professions : peculiarities of the British », in Giddens (A) and Mackenzie (G) (Eds), *Social class and the division of labour : essays in honour of Ilya Neustadt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Johnson, T. (1995) "Governmentality and the institutionalization of expertise", in Johnson (T) ; Larkin (G) and Saks (M) (eds) *Health Professions and the State in Europe*, London, Routledge.

Jones, A. (ed) (1991) *Professions and the State : expertise and autonomy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press

Kieffer, A. (2001) "Catégorisation statistique et harmonisation européenne : l'exemple des catégories socio-professionnelles", *Correspondances*, Tunis

Krause, E. (1996), *Death of the guilds. Professions, States, and the Advance of Capitalism, 1930 to the Present*, Yale, Yale University Press

Lagache, D. (1947), *L'unité de la psychologie*, Paris, PUF

Larkin, G. (1983), *Occupational Monopoly and Modern Medicine*, London, Tavistock

Larson, M. S. (1977) *The rise of professionalism*, California, University of California Press,

O'Reilly, K. and Rose, D. (1998) *Final Report of the ESRC Review of Government Social Classifications*, ESRC, Swindon

Orzack, Louis H. (1991) "The General Systems Directive: Education and the Liberal Professions," in Hurwitz, L. and Lequesne, C. (eds), *The State of the European Community: Politics, Institutions, and Debates in the Transition Years, 1989-1990*, Boulder, Colorado : Lynne Rienner

Orzack, Louis H. (1993) "International Authority and Professions: The State Beyond the Nation-State", Jean Monnet Chair Series. Fiesole (Florence): European University Institute

Parsons, T. (1939) "The professions and social structure", in *Essays in Sociological Theory*, New York, The Free Press

Rueschemeyer, D. (1973) *Lawyers and Their Society: A Comparative Study of the Legal Profession in Germany and in the United States*, Harvard, Harvard University Press

Rueschemeyer, D. (1986) "Comparing legal professions cross-nationally : from a professions-centered to a State-centered approach", *American Bar Foundation Research Journal*, 1986, pp. 415-446

Saglio, J. (1999) "répartition des richesses et formes de salariat", Séminaire du CRISTO, Grenoble, avril

Szreter, S. R. S. (1993) "The Official Representation of Social Classes in Britain, the United States, and France : The Professional Model and 'Les Cadres'", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 35, 2, April, pp. 285-317

Thorstendahl, R. and Burrage, M. (eds). (1990) *The formation of professions. knowledge, State, and strategy*. London, Sage Publications